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JULY 15, 2010 Vol. 52, No. 27 50¢

Las huelgas en China 12

Immigrant rights and the 'Russia spy case'

FBI's new Cold War targets progressive journalist

By LeiLani Dowell
New York

Activists in the Latin American community here are rallying around Vicky Peláez, one of 11 people rounded up by the FBI for allegedly being paid by Russia to spy on the U.S. Many believe that the arrest of Peláez, a journalist who writes sympathetically of anti-imperialist causes, is an attempt to silence dissent and send a threat to the anti-imperialist movement within the U.S.

The 11 are charged with conspiracy to act as agents of a foreign government; some are also charged with money laundering. However, no evidence exists that the 11 — 10 of whom raised families in suburban U.S. communities — actually gathered any significant government information or secrets. Several corporate newspapers have even printed analyses of a so-called "KGB mindset" in Russia that would allow the funding of suburbanites to gather information that can easily be accessed over the Internet.

Progressives, however, are questioning the real motives of the U.S. government in making these arrests now — 10 years after the FBI surveillance of the suspects supposedly began. Conflicting media reports give different versions of the rationale. Some say that one of the 10 was planning to leave the country (the 11th was arrested in Cyprus). Others say that the FBI believed its cover had been blown by another of the 11.

The corporate media created a frenzy around the case that gave them, at least for a day, the ability to downplay news worthy of the front page — particularly the threat of war against Iran, but also the economic crisis, the war in Afghanistan and the BP oil spill. Although the 10 now in the U.S. have yet to even face a trial, the media interviewed incredulous neighbors in a way that implied the charge was true that these suburban residents could be spies.

More ominous in the sweep is the arrest of Peláez, a well-known Peruvian

Continued on page 10

World leaders concerned as U.S., Israel threaten Iran

By Gene Clancy

On June 18, a U.S. carrier group quietly slipped through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea, headed toward the Persian Gulf. The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Force included an aircraft carrier, a guided missile cruiser and nearly a dozen Aegis-class destroyers. Also included were the German frigate GGS Hessen and at least one Israeli vessel.

Three nuclear-powered carriers with their complements of destroyers and cruisers, amphibious assault ships, and 10,000 combat personnel are now arrayed off Iran's coasts.

This military buildup occurred only days after the United Nations Security Council passed a U.S.-backed resolution imposing new economic and military sanctions on Iran. One provision allows the U.S. Navy to board and search "suspicious" ships. The U.S. recently concluded live-fire-bombing practices against targets in the Gulf bordering Iran.

Late in May an Iranian patrol spotted a U.S. nuclear-armed submarine in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which allows

Continued on page 9

At July 4 parade
Thousands hear 'Free Mumia!'

July 4 street meeting in Philadelphia. Below, Mumia spokesperson Pam Africa.

WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

By Monica Moorehead
Philadelphia

Activists supporting African-American political prisoner and revolutionary journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal held a lively street meeting on the corner of Sixth and Market near the Liberty Bell monument in Philadelphia on July 4.

Despite the oppressive heat, supporters spent hours holding signs and banners aloft and speaking on Mumia's case to the thousands of people who had come from around the country to view the Fourth of July parade. Chants of "Brick by brick, wall by wall,

Continued on page 6

OBAMA & IMMIGRATION 'REFORM' 6

COMMUNITY SUMMIT
Defends education 3

RELEASE LYNNE STEWART 6

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UNIONS IN CHINA 10 **ZIMBABWE'S DIAMONDS** 11 **U. OF PUERTO RICO** Struggle not over 8

Racist and anti-communist

Glenn Beck champions U.S. pro-Nazi text

By Caleb T. Maupin

Glenn Beck, an extreme right-wing pundit of television and radio, has shown his outrageous racism and anti-working-class sentiments once again when he told us that Barack Obama "has a deep-seated hatred for white people" and that a massive "invasion" by undocumented workers "threatens our America."

Beck's anti-communism is not new, either. But he made clear his dedication to the capitalist system and racism on June 4 in a pseudo-historical lecture on his radio show. Proclaiming that the author "was doing the same things that we are doing now," Beck promoted "The Red Network," a book written in 1934 by virulent anti-communist Elizabeth Dilling.

The book is a tract of conspiracy theories attempting to link high government officials in the Roosevelt administration with the U.S. Communist Party and the Soviet Union. It is full of confused logic, giant leaps and baseless presumptions.

Dilling would have you believe that the very government that had just sent the National Guard to mow down communist-led strikers in Minneapolis and San Francisco was itself controlled by the Kremlin. Dilling's text stands out, however, for its unapologetic racism and support for the newly installed regime of Adolph Hitler in Germany.

It apologizes for the massive repression and arrests of Jews by the Nazi regime, saying that most of the victims were only "Russian Jews" bent on "Red terrorist revolution" and that "German nationalist Jews" would remain untouched. Dilling portrayed the Black liberation movement as communists manipulating oppressed people to inflame them against whites.

Later in life, Dilling wrote another book called "The Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today." Originally entitled "The Plot Against Christianity," it blamed Jewish people for all the world's problems. Dilling toured the U.S. in 1940 as part of the "America First Committee," a group of fascist sympathizers who opposed war with Germany. Dilling herself was very supportive and most likely a member of the German-American Bund, a U.S. Nazi group that used the swastika as its official symbol and marched in full brown-shirt regalia.

Was Glenn Beck correct in stating that Elizabeth Dilling was "doing the same thing" he is doing? Absolutely.

In the 1930s the global capitalist economy had collapsed, and millions were cast into poverty and misery. However, a strong and powerful movement of the working class finally erupted.

Unemployed workers staged mass hunger marches and even burst into the Capitol building, challenging members of Congress to provide them with jobs or an income. Southern textile workers, organizing their workplaces with the help of the interracial, communist-led Trade Union Unity League, armed in self-defense against gun-toting company goons.

In Harlem, Black artists and writers like Langston Hughes raised the demands of racial equality and self-determination for the Black community. Mass women's organizations demanded a constitutional declaration of gender equality, which already existed in the Soviet Union.

The capitalists could not smash these heroic uprisings with their usual bag of tricks. Many began throwing money and other support behind the fascist movement. They attacked the administration of Franklin Roosevelt as "soft on communism," even though Roosevelt's reforms were in fact aimed at saving capitalism.

Many describe fascism as "capitalism in decay." The fascists were ideologically trained racists and defenders of the capitalist class. However, their propaganda pretended to be "revolutionary" and, in some cases, "anti-capitalist."

Fascists recruited alienated individuals by channeling their rage into attacks on oppressed people and the revolutionary movement. For example, while pretending to be "revolutionary," the fascist Citizens' Alliance and Black Legions attacked striking autoworkers in Flint, Mich., who were demanding that the millionaire bosses recognize their right to unionize.

The Dillings of our day

Today, at a time when long-term unemployment is at its highest level since the Depression and millions are losing their homes, the movement directed by the Glenn Becks and the "Tea Party" is calling for "liberty" and an end to "big government." Instead of attacking the capitalist class and the banks that have impoverished the workers, its target are social programs and the millions who receive very minor assistance in place of a job or livable income.

After first coming out — with much support from the medical corporations — to oppose even the meager health care reform introduced by the Obama administration, these right-wingers soon switched their focus to anti-immigrant racism. These "champions of liberty" defend the racist Arizona law that allows police to search "suspected" undocumented workers and demand proof of legal status at any time. They also try to block women's right to reproductive choice.

While White House journalist Helen Thomas was accused of anti-Semitism and forced to resign for defending the Palestinian people, Glenn Beck can openly champion the writings of a Nazi and continue to earn millions. What better exposes the two-faced capitalist ruling class and media? □

WORKERS WORLD this week...

★ In the U.S.

FBI's new Cold War targets progressive journalist 1
At July 4 parade: Thousands hear 'Free Mumia!' 1
Glenn Beck champions U.S. pro-Nazi text 2
Boston community summit for quality education 3
Fracking chemicals 3
From 'Low-Wage Capitalism' 4
On the picket line 4
Month of Resistance begins in Tucson, Ariz. 5
Struggle defeats Mass. anti-immigrant provisions 5
Union to fight transit layoff 5
Mumia Abu-Jamal: For Lynne Stewart: FREEDOM! 6
Immigrant rights vs. Obama's talk on reform 6
USSF: Pollution has no borders 6
Protest at Chase Bank 7
USSF: Black activists defend the Cuban revolution. 7

★ Around the world

U.S., Israel threaten Iran. 1
Rightist governor tries to reverse UPR student victory 8
Workers begin fightback in Europe 8
Women in Iraq under imperialist siege 9
Debate over role of unions opens in China 10
Imperialists try to block Zimbabwe's diamond trade. 11
Police attack on G20 protests condemned across Canada . . 11

★ Editorials

Whose crisis 10

★ Noticias En Español

Las huelgas en China 12

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Community summit in Boston

Hundreds meet to fight for quality education

By Frank Neisser
Boston

More than 200 parents, students, teachers, school bus drivers, custodians and community activists came together to say "No!" to the Boston School Department and the city's plans to gut public schools and return to racist segregated "neighborhood" schools.

They gathered at a Fight Back summit at the Reggie Lewis Track and Field Center at Roxbury Community College here on June 23 to confront the plans that would deprive Black and Latino/a communities of quality educational resources. Participants agreed they would come to the follow-up meeting on July 7 at the Reggie Lewis Center at 6:30 p.m. to continue planning actions.

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner's political orientation emphasized that the schools in the Black and Latino/a communities of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan and the public schools as a whole are underfunded. He said the solution had to go beyond Boston's resources, and pointed out that full and expanded funding for education could be easily achieved by a reduction in the Pentagon budget.

The city and the School Department provoked this protest with their plans to close public schools; expand private, for-profit charter schools; lay off school workers, including 40 custodians; and limit parental access to schools and programs not in their immediate neighborhood — all of which are segregated. These plans would also drastically reduce transportation services to special education students, who would lose the door-to-door transportation they need to get to school.

Organized by the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, which distributed 20,000 leaflets, the summit drew broad community participation and representation from dozens of organizations.

Summit co-chairs, Boston Public School teacher Jose Lopez of the Coalition for Equal Quality Education and Barbara Fields of Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, both condemned the School Department's plans to hold small focus groups, each composed of 15 invited parents and students, simultaneously around the city. By refusing broad open public meetings to get input and response to the plans, the department was in effect denying parents and students a genuine voice.

The bulk of the summit entailed lively floor discussion. The first segment shared information on how the School Department's plans would harm the community. The second segment discussed actions to stop these plans.

Linda Freeman of the Special Education Parents Advisory Council gave an impassioned appeal about how cutting transportation would devastate access to programs for special-needs students.

Sasha De La Cruz of El Movimiento told how planned cuts would undermine the needs of English language learners.

Union calls for canceling debt service

Recording Secretary Andre Francois of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union read a statement signed by the full executive board of the union calling for putting the needs of education of the students ahead of the $137.5 million in debt service paid to the banks. This debt service amounts to 5.5 percent of the city budget.

The union statement, which was distributed to all present, also attacked layoffs and the department's strategy of blaming teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers and monitors, food service workers, and students for "underperforming" schools. It pointed out that the schools have been underfunded and deprived of resources needed for success.

Audience participation was strong at the community summit in Boston.

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

The union also condemned the move to go backward to the racist segregated neighborhood schools of the past, denying the parents and students of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan access to quality schools and educational opportunities. It expressed solidarity with all those ready to "draw the line and march on the powers that be to stop layoffs, stop privatization, and stop the assaults on our children's rights to an Equal, Quality Education."

Richard Stutman, president of the Boston Teachers Union, and David Jelley, president of the Custodians' union, also spoke.

Ed Childs of UNITE HERE Local 26, chief shop steward of the cafeteria workers at Harvard University, described how the workers there are also facing cutbacks, attacks and layoffs engineered by the banks, the same banks responsible for the university's endowment having lost money. He pointed out that enough money for education and other needs can be found in the trillions in bailout money given to the banks, and that the workers should demand it back.

Mary Jo Hetzel of Work for Quality, Fight for Equity discussed the history of the coalition in successfully fighting back against previous attempts by the School Department to curtail student choice by imposing neighborhood schools. She called on everyone to get involved to reverse the plans again as they did last year.

The Bail Out the People Movement, the Women's Fight Back Network and the International Action Center also prepared and distributed a statement that described the fight against racist segregation in Boston since 1974. This included the history of the 25,000-strong national march against racism in Boston on Dec. 14, 1974. The statement said mass action in the streets is needed again to stop the drive to return to the racist past. □

Fracking chemicals

Just how harmful can 1 percent be?

By Betsey Piette

Potentially toxic and carcinogenic chemicals are used in the hydraulic fracturing process to obtain natural gas from shale. Whenever industry officials are confronted with concerns regarding their use, their standard answer is, "The chemicals account for less than 1 percent of the fluid that is blasted underground."

The problem with this pat response is that they never say what these chemicals are.

A recent editorial in a Philadelphia paper revealed that "during a process known as 'fracking,' drillers pump millions of gallons of water, sand and chemicals underground to break apart the shale deposits and release the gas trapped in the rock. Much of that fracking fluid comes back to the surface, in concentrations saltier than ocean water." (Philadelphia Inquirer, June 17)

At a workshop held during the recent U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, Julian Rodriguez-Diaz of the Ithaca, N.Y.-based Green Guerrillas noted that "one to seven million gallons of water are used per frack [well]." Rodriguez-Diaz presented a slide show with photos of wells being drilled on a friend's property near Ithaca, explaining that one well pad could have up to 24 wells with as many as 16 pads per square mile.

Doing the math, this means there's a potential for between 3,840,000 to 26,880,000 gallons of fracking chemicals to be used in one square mile — hardly a minor amount. Rodriguez-Diaz credited Shaleshock.org for his statistical information.

His slides also demonstrated clearly invasive aspects of the process, in which hundreds of trucks carry water and chemicals over mountainous dirt roads to drilling sites. One slide challenged industry claims of bringing jobs to the areas involved. License plates on vehicles at the site showed few from Pennsylvania or New York.

DEP releases chemical list

Around 1,500 natural gas wells have been drilled in Pennsylvania in the Marcellus Shale region in the past three years, some within view of homes, farms and public roads. In the recently released film "Gasland," producer Josh Fox noted that more than 200,000 new wells are proposed in Pennsylvania and New York, with 50,000 in the New York City watershed alone. Fox has come under heavy criticism from the natural gas industry for sounding the alarm about the impact of industry practices across the U.S.

Despite gas industry claims that fracking fluids have not migrated into ground water, several incidents of contamination have resulted in a growing public concern and demands for regulation. At least 18 species of fish were killed last September when high levels of dissolved solids polluted 26 miles of Dunkard Creek in Greene County, Pa.

In early June, a well blowout in Clearwater County, Pa., resulted in a gas explosion and a 16-hour uncontrolled spill of about a million gallons of toxic wastewater into a creek in Moshannon State Park.

In May the state Agriculture Department quarantined 28 head of cattle on a farm in central Pennsylvania after they came in contact with wastewater that leaked from a natural gas well holding pond. The state was contacted after the family that owned the farm noticed that grass had died in the area. Tests found chloride, iron and other chemicals in the wastewater. (Associated Press, June 1)

These and other incidents led to pressure on the Pennsylvania Department of Environment Protection to release a list of 80 chemicals used in fracking fluids in the state. In New York, regulators also published a list of more than 250 chemicals that could potentially be used there in natural gas drilling.

At the Social Forum workshop, Rodriguez-Diaz said up to 596 different chemicals have been used in the natural gas drilling process in 34 states.

The list provided by the Pennsylvania DEP includes naphthalene, classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a possible carcinogen, and toluene and xylene, both linked to central nervous system depression. While an important first step, the DEP list falls short of really educating the public about the potential danger.

Of the chemicals identified by DEP as being used in fracking fluid, 34 are soluble, allowing them to move into surface and underground water. These include chemicals that cause cancer and disorders of the brain and nervous system, blood, and the immune system.

Wastewater sitting in holding ponds can evaporate into surface air. Twenty-one chemicals are readily airborne, including nine that cause reproductive problems and six known carcinogens. All the known airborne chemicals can harm the skin, respiratory tract, gastrointestinal tract or liver — problems frequently reported near fracking wells across the U.S.

Rodriguez-Diaz's slide show presentation also illustrated the connection between giant oil companies and chemical and drilling industries, noting a link between oil giant ExxonMobil with Halliburton and Schlumberger. These same two corporations played major roles in the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, along with British Petroleum. The slide show included photos of several trucks with Halliburton's logo.

One West Virginia woman at the workshop provided a poignant account of being impacted by coal company mountaintop removal and then having to abandon her family home after her water well was poisoned by fracking fluids. □

From 'Low-Wage Capitalism'

Decatur 'war zone' to Detroit newspaper strike

The following is from the book "Low-Wage Capitalism," a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on the U.S. working class by Fred Goldstein, published in the fall of 2008. This excerpt from Part 3, "Lessons from the Past for Future Struggles," covers a wide range of struggles from the 1930s to the present that show the capacity and willingness of the U.S. working class to engage in militant struggle at great sacrifice. For more information visit www.lowwagecapitalism.com.

An excerpt from Part 3 of the book, printed in the July 1 issue of WW, asserted that the decline in the labor movement was not inevitable because workers were willing to fight back against the anti-labor offensive of the last 30 years. The following are three militant struggles which are part of a series of examples touched upon in the book that illustrate this willingness of the rank and file to struggle. Three other examples were in the July 8 issue.

1987-1995: International Paper, Greyhound, Decatur 'War Zone'

There were numerous other struggles during this period. Some were won, most were lost, but all involved militant resistance by the workers. The local unions were left to fight major corporations, most with worldwide holdings and deep pockets, without the support of the national labor leadership. These locals had to rely on their own efforts to rally solidarity from other locals and communities around the country.

The workers at International Paper waged militant struggles in Maine and Pennsylvania in 1987 to stop concessions. Greyhound workers belonging to the Amalgamated Transport Union fought concessions with militant struggle in 1990. They occupied bus terminals, battled scabs and police all across the country, and occasionally took even more forceful measures.

The "war zone" struggles in Decatur, Illinois, referred to the battle of three local unions against Caterpillar, Staley, and Bridgestone/Firestone between the years 1993 and 1995, all in the same city at the same time.

The Staley workers waged a dynamic and determined struggle. They had answered concessions with a "work-to-rule" campaign but were finally forced out on strike. After being locked out, they sent contingents of "road warriors" around the country and created a support and solidarity network. The three unions banded together eventually, but were unable to get the required national mobilization of the AFL-CIO to push back against the corporate war for concessions. The bosses were in a common front against all three unions, but the labor movement would not mount a corresponding front to push back.

1992-1998: Culinary Workers, Las Vegas

During the same period, Culinary Workers Local 226, affiliated with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE; now merged into UNITE HERE), carried on a militant organizing campaign at the big gambling casinos in Las Vegas. Earlier, the existing unions had been broken when big financial operators moved in to take over the casinos. The campaign to rebuild the unions was based upon empowering the low-paid immigrant and African-American kitchen workers and maids and establishing stewards and leadership committees in all the departments. The union carried out strikes, mass marches, and sit-ins and negotiated a major agreement in 1989 that considerably lifted the standard of living of the workers.

The struggle against one of the holdout casinos, the Frontier, was a legendary battle and a landmark in recent union history. It lasted six and a half years. There were picket lines twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In 1992 the union organized a march across the Mojave Desert to Los Angeles. The next year, a solidarity march from Los Angeles to Las Vegas met up with a demonstration of 20,000 that shut down the famous strip there.

The strike was supported by the solidarity of the rank and file. Non-striking members of Local 226, also low-paid workers, voted to increase their dues so those on strike could get benefits of $200 a week. The national union strongly backed the strike. The company finally surrendered in 1998 in the face of unbreakable solidarity and militancy. During the strike the union continued its organizing drive. The union has inspired others and lent assistance to organizing drives in hospitals and the building trades in Nevada.

Based on the militancy of the rank and file, their willingness to sacrifice, brave arrest, and take risks, and the high consciousness of worker solidarity, Las Vegas has become a center of union revival in a period of anti-labor reaction.

1995-1997: Detroit Newspaper Strike

During the Detroit newspaper strike against concessions, which lasted from 1995 to 1997, six unions representing workers at the Gannett and Knight-Ridder newspaper empires militantly battled a lockout and scab herding. The potential for a landmark victory against concessions was considerable, given that the strike took place in the center of unionism in the Midwest and the workers were determined not to give in.

The critical moment in the strike took place early on as the Detroit working class flexed its muscles. The 2,000 striking workers were joined by reinforcements from the Detroit labor movement. The workers set up mass picket lines at the printing plants, fought the police and scabs for hours at a time, and stopped production. A court then issued an injunction establishing a ten-picket rule. The local labor leadership made the critical decision to back down in the face of a court injunction against mass picketing.

In spite of the injunction, groups of 1,000 workers set up lines at distribution centers every Saturday night and fought the cops for three months, either stopping or cutting down the crucial Sunday newspaper distribution. But the leadership called off these picket lines.

Instead of escalating the struggle, the union leadership bowed to the courts. From then on the billionaire news empires won the war of attrition and the strike was finally called off in February 1997. The fight to restore the locked-out workers shifted to the National Labor Relations Board and the courts, where the relationship of forces was unfavorable, especially once the pressure of the workers' struggle was gone.

Even after the strike was called off, there was a chance to revive the struggle. In July 1997, the AFL-CIO brought 100,000 workers from forty-five states and Canada to descend on Detroit to demand restoration of the jobs of the locked-out workers and removal of the scabs. The mass march that took place was a demonstration of potential working-class power, but it was censored out of the national news by the capitalist media.

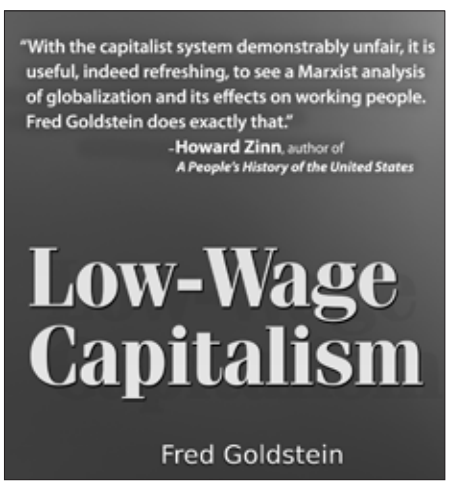
This was an opportune moment to revive a genuine struggle. It was not hard to mobilize such a massive demonstration because Michigan, headquarters of the Big Three automakers, had been devastated by plant closings and concessions for more than fifteen years. Signs saying "No Scab Newspapers" were in thousands of stores, on lawns, and in every union hall in Detroit, including the UAW, where the autoworkers were also under pressure to make more concessions. While the unions in the Decatur "war zone" had been defeated, the masses of unionized workers were eager to show their desire to fight back.

Calls and petitions for massive demonstrations of the labor movement and even for a one-day general strike had surfaced early in the strike. But the AFL-CIO leadership waited a year and a half to call a mass demonstration — and then it was after the strike was called off. They made it a purely symbolic gesture rather than a call to arms.

Most of these struggles were defensive ones, against concessions. They remained defensive and had to fight against overwhelming odds. The official labor leadership of the AFL-CIO and the dozens of international unions that make it up let each struggle remain as an isolated guerrilla action of individual locals fighting against big capital, which had the state and the banks behind it.

Source for newspaper strike: "Showdown in Motown: the Detroit Newspaper Strike 1995-1997," unpublished compilation of articles appearing in Workers World newspaper, 1995-1997, written by trade union participants in the strike support effort: Kris Hamel, David Sole, Key Martin, Stephanie Hedgecoke, and Jerry Goldberg.

Next: UPS Teamster strike.



Low-Wage Capitalism

what the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.

Fred Goldstein's book provides an easy-to-read analysis of the roots of the current global economic crisis, its implications for workers and oppressed peoples, and the strategy needed for future struggle.

Paperback, 336 pages. Includes graphs, charts, bibliography, endnotes and index.

Available at www.Leftbooks.com and bookstores around the country

On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

Support grows for Mott's workers

Members of Local 400 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store union (part of the Food and Commercial Workers union) in Washington, D.C., are distributing flyers in Washington-area grocery stores urging consumers not to buy products made by Mott's or Mott's owner Dr. Pepper/Snapple. That's their way of supporting the May 23 strike of 300 Mott's applesauce workers in RWDSU-UFCW Local 220 in Williamson, N.Y. The workers called an unfair labor practices strike when the company proposed slashing wages by as much as $2.50 per hour and eliminating the workers' pension plan. While DPS claims the workers are "overpriced" the three highest paid DPS executives doubled their pay between 2007 and 2009, and company stock has rocketed 28 percent since the most recent earnings announcement in February. For a list of DPS products to boycott, visit nobadapples.org. Call Mott's office at 800-426-4891 and tell them you support Local 220 workers! (Union City, online daily newsletter of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO, July 1)

Co-op City workers win decent contract

After RiverBay Corp. locked them out of their jobs for nearly a month after their contract expired, more than 500 Co-Op City workers in the Bronx, N.Y., ratified a hard-fought four-year contract. Not only will the Co-Op City porters, handypeople, maintenance workers, garbage attendants and groundskeepers, represented by Service Employees Local 32BJ, receive yearly raises amounting to 5.6 percent over four years, but RiverBay will continue to pay for family health care and pension benefits. The New York City Board of Health put pressure on RiverBay to settle when it declared a health emergency for the 60,000 residents forced to live amidst mountains of uncollected garbage.

Hotel workers confront Hyatt shareholders

Hundreds of UNITE HERE hotel workers and community allies protested in front of Hyatt's first annual shareholder meeting in Chicago the week of June 7. Simultaneous demonstrations were held in Honolulu, Vancouver, San Francisco and Los Angeles. The reason: Hyatt's revenue and share prices have soared — its principal shareholders, the Pritzker family, cashed out more than $900 million last November — while the chain is cutting staff and forcing workers to do more work for less pay. A few days before that, hundreds of Hyatt workers in Chicago staged a walkout to protest worsening working conditions. More than 400 Hyatt workers in San Francisco have been out on strike for months. More than 9,000 UH members have been working without a contract in San Francisco since August 2009. (aflcio blog, June 14) On June 11 more than 200 youth, participating in the AFL-CIO's Young Worker Summit, rallied at D.C.'s Westin City Center, a nonunion hotel where new owner Columbia-Sussex slashed pay and benefits. (Union City, June 15)

Stand up for grocery workers

Contract negotiations for 25,000 grocery store workers in Washington's Puget Sound area are gaining momentum, with raises, paid sick leave, more predictable scheduling, and health care and pension benefits at the top of the list of demands. After being briefed on how bargaining was going on June 14, members of Food and Commercial Workers Local 21 who work at Quality Food Center, Safeway, Albertsons, Fred Meyer and other stores distributed the Grocery Store Workers Bill of

Continued on page 5

¡Ya Basta/Enough!

Month of Resistance begins in Tucson

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

On June 29, a coalition of 17 Tucson community organizations kicked off a month of resistance against the racist and divisive SB 1070 law with a well-attended press conference, one month before the law goes into effect.

The press conference was held in downtown Tucson outside the State Building, which is located at an intersection across the street from the federal courthouse, where mass deportation proceedings take place daily. The proximity of these two buildings has caused this intersection to become the focal point of immigrant rights' demonstrations in this city.

PHOTO: SOFIA SOPA TEONA

Protest in Atlanta this June wants no All-Star Game in Arizona.

Isabel García, immigrant rights activist and leader of Derechos Humanos, a community organization, opened the press conference by proclaiming in Spanish and English, "We are announcing our actions against SB 1070, to put pressure on the Obama administration to stop this enforcement madness, and we proclaim our resistance."

Other coalition members spoke about the culpability of U.S. imperialism in creating the flow of migrants by enacting so-called free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, which force tens of thousands of Latin American farmers off their land and then force them to make the choice to either migrate or starve.

A representative of Jewish Voices for Peace noted how Palestinians live under an SB 1070 of their own, citing Israel's military occupation and an Israeli law that forces Palestinians to carry documents at all times.

The coalition has broad support and includes the youth organization Tierra y Libertad, the Indigenous group Calpolli Teoxicalli, as well as University of Arizona Students Against SB 1070 and Students for Justice in Palestine. The International Action Center, Tucson May 1 Coalition, Alliance for Global Justice and We Reject Racism Campaign are also participants.

After continuous organizing throughout the week, protesters surrounded the State Building in a human chain of resistance in a three-hour demonstration on July 2. The organizing continues with a major demonstration planned for each Friday evening and culminating in a day of action against SB 1070 on July 29.

"If a law is unjust, our duty is RESISTANCE!" says the coalition's leaflet. Contact tucson@workers.org or info@tucsonmay1st.org to join this campaign of resistance. □

Student Immigration Movement

Struggle defeats Mass. anti-immigrant provisions

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Students and youth in the Student Immigration Movement spearheaded a dynamic struggle called Mass Hope 2010 that won a significant victory for immigrant rights.

On June 9 the Massachusetts Senate passed a series of amendments to the state budget bill that were virulently anti-immigrant, racist and punitive. Included were an anonymous hotline to report anyone suspected of being undocumented or any employer suspected of hiring undocumented workers and strict provisions to prevent undocumented workers from receiving any benefits, including basic health care, housing benefits and in-state tuition at Massachusetts public colleges.

On June 10 at 6 p.m. SIM students and youth and their allies began a 24/7 vigil on the steps of the Massachusetts State House, vowing to stay until all the anti-immigrant provisions were dropped. The vigil was also in solidarity with the 24/7 vigil underway at the Arizona Statehouse since April 24 protesting the racist anti-immigrant Arizona law SB 1070, which is scheduled to go into effect at the end of July.

The around-the-clock vigil included press conferences, rallies, demonstrations, workshops, speakouts and lobbying inside the Statehouse. Support for and participation in the vigil continued to grow, involving dozens of immigrant rights, community and progressive organizations and groups, which participated by taking vigil shifts, conducting workshops and discussions, and forming strong links of solidarity.

On June 15 all the forces involved in the vigil joined with unions and others for a 200-strong demonstration at Fenway Park where the Arizona Diamondbacks opened a series against the Boston Red Sox. Heavy media coverage of this demonstration raised consciousness about the struggle.

On June 21 the students held a press conference in which they delivered more than 1,000 petition signatures opposing the anti-immigrant amendments to legislators at the State House. On June 22 another large rally was held.

PHOTO: SIM

SIM leader Lai Wa Wu addresses vigil participants.

Activity continued throughout the week until June 25 when Mass Hope 2010 and SIM held a press conference announcing that the final budget reflected a victory — all the anti-immigrant language and provisions were removed except those that reflect current practice. The students announced they were ending the vigil and held a final celebration. But the movement they organized is continuing, and will fight the Arizona laws and all other attacks on immigrant rights.

Commenting on the significance of the struggle, SIM leader Lai Wa Wu said, "SIM could not have achieved this victory without the massive community-based coalitions that came together to fight against anti-immigrant sentiments. The fight for immigrant rights isn't a fight only for undocumented communities; it is a fight for the dignity and respect for all people — citizens and noncitizens alike. We know this is only the beginning, and there will be many more battles to come, but as long as our community stays in solidarity together, we will win." □

On the Picket Line

Rights to local store managers. More than 10,000 workers have already signed it, including a majority of workers in almost every store in the region. A contract extension is in effect, and four bargaining dates have been set between July 7 and 29. (ufcw21.org, July 2)

Three S.F. Labor Council resolutions

The San Francisco Labor Council passed three resolutions on June 14 on very different but equally important topics. The SFLC joined scores of labor federations around the world in condemning the May 31 Israeli attack on the Gaza Aid Flotilla in international waters. It called for an independent international investigation of the deadly assault and asked Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza. It also addressed two domestic issues: supporting students at San Francisco State University who protested budget cuts and demanding an equitable community service jobs program. □

Union to fight transit layoffs

By Dee Knight
New York

The New York Metropolitan Transit Authority's announcement of 800 job cuts at the end of June means that hundreds of station booths will be shut down and bus and transit service reduced across the city's five boroughs. The MTA seeks to privatize and restructure transit for more layoffs, service cuts and fare hikes.

The Transport Workers Union Local 100 leadership said "enough already!" The union swung into action, but it is not alone. It is forming a labor/community alliance to organize to fight back and reverse the budget cuts.

On June 30 union members — including those laid off and those who are working — union officers and staff met with community organizers at the TWU hall to plan a response. The first stage of their plan entails distributing flyers at major stations and intersections, which call upon riders to come to court-ordered MTA hearings on July 13 and 14.

The MTA seeks to have the hearings follow the usual script: The authority will hold the hearings but then ignore what participants say and then move ahead with their plans. That makes the hearings a sham. The MTA has given insufficient notice to the public and provided very little publicity. The Queens hearing cannot be reached by subway, only by bus.

However, this time it will be different, as union and community organizers are swinging into action and appealing to all unions, organizations and individuals to join the campaign. Organizing teams comprised of union members and riders have been set up for each borough. The teams are going to distribute campaign flyers, which read: "The Transit System Belongs to the People. Take Back Our Stations, Buses and the Transit System."

The newly formed Labor-Community Forum of the South Bronx Community Congress, together with TWU Local 100, will host an organizing meeting at Hostos College on July 7.

This fightback will build on a partial victory won by a recent student struggle against the MTA. Student activists beat back the MTA's threatened plan to stop providing free and reduced-fare Metro Cards to students.

Organizers invite all members of the riding public to get involved in this campaign, to get leaflets, attend these hearings and demand a reinstatement of all jobs and transit services now. Contact Marvin Holland at 347-804-6982 for further information on MTA hearing locations and how you can get involved in this campaign. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

For Lynne Stewart: FREEDOM!

Taken from a June 27 audio column at www.prisonradio.org.

Lynne Stewart, targeted by the Bush-era Justice Department for daring to forcefully advocate for her client, is in danger — and only immense popular support can save her.

She's in danger not just from a recent cancer diagnosis, but from the cancerous decision of the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals to re-sentence her to a longer, harsher term than the trial court decided.

Stewart has had an exemplary career as a defense lawyer for the poor, the oppressed and those deemed unpopular by the establishment. It was in this context that she was targeted by the state and unjustly convicted of providing material support to an alleged terrorist conspiracy, for speaking out on behalf of her client, the blind, Egyptian cleric.

The late William Kunstler, a radical lawyer who represented similar clients, recently said that defense attorneys should be "officers of their clients," instead of "officers of the court."* Lynne Stewart was, like Kunstler, an "officer of [her] client," which is another reason she was targeted.

She violated what was essentially a prison regulation — an SAM, or Special Administrative Measure, one that she probably rightly thought couldn't possibly supersede her constitutional and professional duty to defend her client. However, she underestimated the base opportunism of government and the subservience of the courts, even at the costs of constitutional rights and alleged "guarantees."

On the evening of July 8, Lynne Stewart's friends, admirers and supporters will gather at Judson Memorial Church [55 Washington Square South, New York City] to express solidarity with an extraordinary woman, a gifted lawyer and a person who was convicted for her political ideas and affiliations.

Show your love!

** William M. Kunstler, "The Emerging Police State," Melbourne/New York: Ocean Press, 2004, p. 41.*

Join a protest to support Lynne Stewart:

▶Wednesday, July 14
5:00 p.m. march and rally at Tom Paine Park on Worth St. between Centre and Lafayette Streets to Foley Square , Worth and Centre Street, in front of court buildings and a 7:00 p.m. vigil in support behind the MCC Jail at 150 Park Row.

▶ Thursday, July 15, 2:30 p.m., which is sentencing day, come to the Federal Courthouse, at 500 Pearl Street. Come early at 11 a.m. for a rally and pack the court. Both actions in Manhattan, NYC. For more information on how to help, see **www.lynnestewart.org**.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's book,
'JAILHOUSE LAWYERS:
Prisoners defending prisoners v. the U.S.A.'
Available at
Leftbooks.com

Immigrant rights vs. Obama's talk on reform

By Teresa Gutierrez

President Barack Obama gave a major address on immigration on July 1, after much anticipation by the immigrant rights movement.

If immigrants and supporters expected anything positive to come out of the speech, they were greatly disappointed. In fact, what President Obama endorsed as proposed policy is everything the movement has been fighting against, not only since 2006, but historically.

Obama continued to frame the immigration question within the context of security issues, as opposed to labor or civil rights. He chastised workers for being in this country "illegally" and said they "make a mockery of all those who are going through the process of immigrating legally." He also said the "11 million" who are in the U.S. without documents "should be held accountable."

Obama made a slight attempt to distance himself from the recent passage of SB 1070 in Arizona by calling it "ill conceived." But he also said it was "understandable" given the "level of frustration" in the country.

The president proclaimed that the southern U.S. border is "more secure today than at any time in the past 20 years." In fact, there are "more boots on the ground on the Southwest border than at any time in our history."

He emphasized greater penalties for employers who hire workers without documents, saying this would reduce the "incentive" for people to come here, and stressed putting in place the E-Verify system for all workers applying for jobs. E-Verify is ominous not only for immigrants but for all workers, as it strengthens the Homeland Security system of surveillance.

Obama stated his support for the DREAM Act, legislation that attempts to address legalization for the millions of youth who came here at a very young age and have grown up in this country without documents. The DREAM Act has been a bone of contention in the immigrant rights movement, as it unfortunately tracks youth into the military if they cannot get into higher education or find a job.

Nonetheless, a huge wing of the movement has supported the heroic students who have waged a valiant struggle for the DREAM Act, including hunger strikes endangering their health. The youth leading the struggle are for the most part undocumented and are valiantly coming out, declaring they are "undocumented and unafraid."

The movement for immigrant rights, especially the students and youth fighting for the DREAM Act, should fight any attempts by the government and the media to divide the movement. The call by Obama to support the DREAM Act while ignoring other demands of the movement could easily become a divisive point if the movement does not unite around all its demands.

Obama admonished the Republicans in Congress for not attempting to compromise on bi-partisan, comprehensive immigration reform. Unfortunately, the Republicans and the far-right in this country who vociferously demonize immigrants and whip up a xenophobic and racist climate against immigrant workers are not the only problem.

Neither the White House nor Congress, no matter which side of the aisle politicians are on, is willing to do right by immigrant workers. Why? Because Washington does the bidding of the corporations, the Pentagon, the bosses and Wall Street.

There is a deep economic crisis in this country. Joblessness and housing foreclosures will only increase. The ruling class needs scapegoats. And one of those scapegoats is immigrant labor.

Immigrants were welcomed in this country when the capitalist economy was strong, but they are now demonized and rounded up when the economy is weak.

If Obama had the political will, he could issue an executive order immediately legalizing everyone in this country. The unions as well as all U.S. workers should push for this, as it would immediately lift the standard of living for all. As has often been said, "A rising tide lifts all boats."

But if Obama's work on health care or the financial crisis is any barometer, only the movement can assure that its demands are met.

There is a wing of the immigrant rights movement that refuses to compromise on demands for immediate legalization, an end to the militarization of the border, a repeal of NAFTA-like laws, and jobs, education and housing for all. These demands can become a reality if the movement continues to build on its momentum. On to May Day 2011! □

At July 4 parade

Thousands hear 'FREE MUMIA!'

Continued from page 1

we're gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "No justice, no peace, 'til Mumia Abu-Jamal's released" could be heard as marching bands and floats passed by.

Demonstrators also chanted, "Bring the troops home," whenever a military contingent was spotted in the parade. As a blatantly racist and offensive 7th Calvary contingent led by an impersonator of Gen. George Armstrong Custer and white women dressed in Native clothing passed by, the activists chanted, "We remember Wounded Knee." The U.S. Army massacred hundreds of Native people at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890.

Custer carried out numerous massacres of Native peoples during the 19th century before he and hundreds of other soldiers were killed at Little Big Horn by warriors of the Lakota and Cheyenne nations led by the great leader Sitting Bull.

Mumia, a former member of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party, was convicted of a first-degree murder charge on July 3, 1982, by a Philadelphia jury for killing a white police officer.

Mumia has maintained his innocence since he was arrested on Dec. 9, 1981. He has been on Pennsylvania death row for 28 years, has faced two execution warrants, and could face another execution date if all his legal appeals are exhausted.

There is a currently a national and international campaign to demand that the U.S. Justice Department carry out a civil rights investigation into the conspiracy to demonize and silence Mumia through the courts. For more information, visit www.freemumia.com and www.millions-4mumia.org.

Members of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Free Mumia Coalition (NYC), International Action Center, FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), New Black Panther Party, Workers World Party and others participated in the street meeting. □

Larry Hales WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

USSF Environmenta

Pollution h

By Betsey Piette
Detroit

More than 300 people from the U.S., Canada and Latin America participated in a vibrant People's Movement Assembly at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit on June 25 to discuss global ecological justice and environmental racism.

Nearly 20 organizations, including several representing Indigenous and immigrant communities, combined three separate PMAs into one very powerful event with speakers from over a dozen communities directly impacted by environmental racism in the city of Detroit, the state of Arizona, the Gulf of Mexico and beyond.

Around 10 percent of the audience had attended the April 2010 Climate Change conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and there was a clear anti-capitalist sentiment in the gathering.

Fitting with the general theme of Detroit as the epicenter of the economic crisis, the PMA first heard from Ahmina Maxey, with the East Michigan Environmental Council. This group is part of the Zero Waste Detroit Coalition, which is organizing against the world's largest incinerator, owned by Covanta and located in an African-American residential neighborhood across from a public school. Children in the area have high rates of asthma and other health problems.

Maxey encouraged everyone's participation in a Detroit rally for clean air, good jobs and justice scheduled for June 26, noting that the action would "connect to

Protest at Chase Bank demands:

‘Moratorium on foreclosures! Stop funding farm worker abuse!’

By Ben Carroll
Detroit

An estimated 1,000 people marched on Chase Bank in Detroit on June 25 during the U.S. Social Forum to demand a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions and an end to Chase’s funding of RJ Reynolds’ abuse of farmworkers in North Carolina’s tobacco fields.

The demonstration, organized by Detroit’s Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and the Faith and Spirituality Committee of the USSF, drew farmworkers, Detroit residents, trade unionists, members of the faith community and activists from across the country to target the bank for its attacks on workers and its role in the economic crisis.

The action began with a rally at Grand Circus Park and pushed downtown through the financial district as chants of “Bail out people, not banks!” and “Chase Bank, shame on you, farmworkers are people too!” filled the streets. Once at Chase, a spirited picket line was formed that completely surrounded the bank.

The demonstration swelled up the steps of the bank as a delegation that had intended to meet with bank officials to discuss the demands was blocked from entering the building. After a standoff and struggle at the door with police, the delegation, which consisted of FLOC president Baldemar Velásquez, United Auto Workers president Bob King and religious leaders, was allowed to enter the building.

FLOC has been organizing for more than three years to win improvements in working conditions for tobacco workers in the fields of North Carolina who supply RJ Reynolds. Despite organizing massive community pressure on Reynolds to win basic increases in human rights for farmworkers, the tobacco giant refuses to negotiate with the workers.

FLOC has developed a new approach of looking at who does business with Reynolds as a way to pressure the company to come to the table. “JP Morgan Chase is the largest Reynolds creditor and gives almost a half billion dollars in credit to Reynolds. When they receive repayments on the loans they give, they are profiting off of those conditions for farmworkers,” said FLOC organizer Justin Flores.

“We decided to organize a future boycott and get pledges from people all over the U.S. with Chase bank accounts or credit cards to be willing to take out their money the day after Labor Day if JP Morgan Chase doesn’t do something to pressure Reynolds about the working conditions.”

Chase Bank was also targeted because of its role in the predatory lending scandal that continues to cost taxpayers billions of dollars and resulted in the ongoing foreclosure epidemic that has devastated whole sections of Detroit and other cities.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition has been raising a demand for several years for a national moratorium on foreclosures and evictions which would cost nothing and allow families to stay in their homes. One coalition organizer told this reporter how refreshing it was to hear the new UAW president leading chants for the moratorium.

The focus aimed at both the foreclosure crisis and attacks on working people exposed the central role the banks continue to play in the ongoing economic crisis. The unity built between the struggles to win a moratorium on foreclosures and for farmworkers to get justice in the fields was a major advance for both struggles.

Carroll is an organizer in Raleigh, N.C., with the youth organization Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

At USSF

Black activists defend the Cuban revolution

By Dolores Cox
Detroit

The need for African-American solidarity with Cuba was the subject of a U.S. Social Forum workshop organized by the Cuba Working Group of the Black Left Unity Network on June 23 in Detroit. The group challenged the recent accusations of Cuba being a racist society. The aim of all unjustified attacks against Cuba, of course, has been to discredit the social, political and economic gains of the Cuban socialist revolution and its system of ensuring equitable distribution of resources for all.

The U.S. has systematically and continually sought to undermine and destroy Cuba. It was mentioned that sadly some misguided African-American intellectuals and celebrities have unwittingly bought into this accusation, promulgated by Cuban expatriates, dissenters and, of course, U.S. and Western-led imperialists.

The workshop gave an overview of Cuba’s struggle against 450 years of colonialism and neocolonial exploitation and its war of independence from Spain. Cuba then succeeded in abolishing slavery in 1886.

This struggle occurred at the same time that African Americans were fighting for their freedom in the U.S., a struggle that continues today. U.S. racist intervention and occupation in Cuba in 1898, however, reestablished institutionalized racism in Cuba. But the successful 1959 Cuban socialist revolution officially abolished legalized racism.

Since the revolution, Cuba has been actively working toward combating and eradicating centuries of racism created by its former colonizers, Spain and the U.S. But it’s impossible to eradicate racism overnight in any underdeveloped country. Meanwhile, while these claims of Cuba’s racism are made, poverty, unjust exploitation, gender discrimination and racial oppression are far from being eliminated here in the U.S. — the richest country in the world.

Cuba’s socialist government utilizes “adaptive leadership” to address and solve its problems and engages its people in the process of improving society and workers’ empowerment.

Despite the almost 50-year-old inhumane U.S. blockade, Cuba’s socialist system has managed to eradicate illiteracy, guarantee free education and health care, and provide housing.

Cuba has progressive laws to protect all its citizens regardless of skin color as well as anti-racist, anti-discrimination equality policies and programs. Additionally, Cuba has a history of internationalism with Africa and elsewhere, despite its lack of resources. The workshop stated that Black Cubans have been instrumental in transforming their society.

Tony Vandermeer, professor of African Studies at Boston’s University of Massachusetts, reported in the workshop that he recently took five young students to Cuba when Cuba held its 10th anniversary Slave Remembrance Day. The students went sailing in a small replica of the Amistad slave ship. They were asked to imagine the physical and mental journey of enslaved Africans crossing the Atlantic during the European slave trade.

One student attending the workshop referred to the experience as terrifying. He also mentioned how “free” he felt while in Cuba and praised its humanity and accomplishments. Students also met with Cuban students and government officials.

Several Black people in the multinational workshop testified that going to Cuba was a “life-changing” experience. They reinforced the panel’s assessments and impressions of Cuba. While the U.S. makes it very difficult for people in the U.S to travel to Cuba, workshop panel members encouraged everyone to visit Cuba, especially young people, so that they can become informed and think for themselves.

The BLUN announced a “Thank You Cuba!” campaign, with postcards thanking Cuba for supporting the Haitian people and their solidarity with Katrina survivors and calling for the end to U.S. travel restrictions, the blockade and freedom for the Cuban Five. It was also mentioned that Cuba is in solidarity with Palestinian freedom fighters.

BLUN is distributing postcards for endorsement signatures. After collecting the postcards, they plan to organize a Black delegation to deliver them to Cuba. For more information go to tiny.cc/5csa6.

Finally, the workshop emphasized that Cuba has been an historic ally of the U.S. Black Freedom Movement and that the African-American community must help Cuba protect the rich gains of its revolutionary process. Cuba profoundly serves as a living example that “another world is truly possible!” □

l PMA

has no borders

what’s going on in the Detroit area around housing and jobs, and also what’s going on in the Gulf of Mexico. We are all connected to oil in some way.”

Ronald Wahl described conditions in southwest Detroit’s 48217 ZIP code area, which carries the unwelcome distinction of being Michigan’s most polluted community. Since 1961, Wahl has lived in this neighborhood of about 370 homes completely surrounded by dozens of industrial plants and oil refineries.

Wahl’s spouse has had several types of cancer and eight of his grandchildren have asthma. “People in the area are willing to sell their homes for as little as $300 to get out of the area,” reported Wahl, whose doctor recently told him to move because “this environment is killing you.”

SB 1070 — State gives stamp of approval to racial profiling

Several speakers linked the fight for ecological justice with the movement for migrant and immigrant rights. José Bravo, with the Just Transition Alliance from Chula Vista, Calif., took note of proposed rulings that would refuse jobs to Mexican workers. He said such rulings wrongly direct hate against immigrants and people of color from working-class communities, when it’s corporations that are responsible for the loss of jobs. Bravo said, “People and what people produce should not have to migrate in order to have jobs.”

For young Tucson immigrant rights activist Leilani Clark, Arizona’s SB 1070 was “just a state stamp of approval” for racial profiling that has been going on for decades. “When NAFTA passed in 1994,” Clark noted, “the U.S. knew migrants would come north to find jobs. They closed off city ports of entry, effectively funneling migrants into the most desolate and isolated areas. Between September 2009 and May 2010, 110 bodies were recovered in the desert, all in four Arizona counties.”

Clark said: “U.S. economic policies are driving people from their homelands and causing displacement of Indigenous people, including the complete depopulation of 45 villages along the border. The extremely strong lights that come on at night along the border are also devastating fragile ecosystems.”

El Paso migrant worker organizer Carlos Marentes described a change in the outlook of migrant agricultural workers who used to see small farmers and consumers as the problem but now see them as potential allies. “We are all victims of the same U.S. industrial agriculture system based on the exploitation of workers, but also on displacement of communities, and for production of food that is often not safe to eat,” he stated. “It’s all for profits.”

Marentes concluded: “It’s not enough to put the head of British Petroleum in jail. That won’t bring back workers who lost their lives or undo the damage to the Gulf. We need to replace this destructive system.” His remarks received enthusi-

Continued on page 10

Rightist Puerto Rico governor tries to reverse UPR student victory

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

There are no vacations yet for the students who won a two-month strike at the University of Puerto Rico. Instead, they have continued organizing and demanding that the administration fulfills the agreement.

These were the agreement's terms: no Certification 98, which would have eliminated tuition exemptions for students who receive a U.S. federal Pell scholarship for academic excellence; no privatization of the campuses under Gov. Luis Fortuño's neoliberal decree on Public-Private Alliances, an attempt by the current pro-statehood government to privatize Puerto Rico's heritage; no charges against the students, faculty and workers who, exercising their freedom of speech and assembly, participated in many demonstrations during the strike; and no imposition of a special quota in August that would have doubled the tuition, which is on average $2,000 a year.

Fortuño's pro-statehood, neoliberal, right-wing administration immediately tried to overturn the agreement. In a fast-track imposition, Fortuño increased the number of members of the UPR's Board of Trustees from 13 to 17, appointing four people close to his administration in an effort to have more leverage in the near future to overturn the agreement reached in June.

Anti-people budget passed

June 30 was the last day of the national budget session in the Puerto Rican legislature. Knowing full well the unpopularity of the proposed budget, the right-wing, pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) leadership closed the proceedings to the press and the public in an attempt to pass several anti-people measures.

With heavy police presence, including riot police on the perimeter, and the absence of legislators from the Popular Democratic Party — who left in protest after casting their votes opposing all the proposed legislations — the PNP majority approved the new national budget.

These budget measures include a crucial amendment of the UPR bylaws, effectively terminating the right of the students to discuss and make decisions in a public assembly. Instead the new law imposes the secret ballot through e-mail.

Students' and people's response

Both mainstream and alternative press, students and other individuals and organizations converged on the Capitol that day to oppose the proposed budget and have a voice in the deliberations. Police greeted them with pepper gas and beatings with nightsticks.

Workers World spoke with Rosalinda Soto, the mother of Waldemiro Vélez, one of the leaders of the UPR strike. Soto is an organizer of the Mothers and Fathers in Support of the Students, an organization formed during the strike. She was at the Capitol that day and told WW "that action [by the police] was capricious and planned. As a mother, I have been present in negotiations with the police during all the strike, so that the riot police would not enter, but that day, before we could start any negotiation, the riot police started pushing and shoving and throwing tear gas. I tell you, in my 38 years in the struggle I have never witnessed something like that."

She described the events of the rest of the day: The protesters had to run from the police attack, taking refuge in a nearby church. Two students were arrested and several students beaten, including a 17-year-old high school student and her mother, who tried to shield her daughter from the police assault. Several people tried to press charges, but the police refused.

This aggression outraged people on the island. The following day the College of Lawyers organized an assembly of leaders from several groups, which called for a July 18 national demonstration against the Fortuño administration's violence and civil rights abuses.

The leadership of the UPR students who are in favor of that demonstration called for a broader peoples' assembly. Giovanni Roberto, a student in the UPR National Negotiating Committee, stated, "The next fronts have to emanate from the people so that a real transformation of the country can occur." (primerahora.com, July 1)

On July 2, left organizations including the Socialist Front, the newly formed Puerto Rican Communist Party and the National Pro Independence Hostos Movement protested in front of the police headquarters, swelling to more than 1,000 people who effectively closed busy Roosevelt Avenue to traffic. They chanted, "I throw stones, I throw pepper, because I have the right to defend myself" and "FBI and police are the same garbage." Some placards read, "The UPR will be the tomb of fascism."

Several more actions are being planned at many levels.

Dangerous dictatorial measures

The PNP regime's laws and anti-worker measures, along with Fortuño's earlier addition of four right-wing PNP justices to the Supreme Court to more easily execute the neoliberal laws, have been coupled with an increase in repression not seen since the Ponce Massacre in the 1930s. In Ponce, police killed 17 unarmed people at a Puerto Rican Nationalist Party demonstration.

To top it off, the Fortuño administration announced on July 4 a deal with the New York Police Department to "make the responses of the Puerto Rican Police more professional" during operations in demonstrations. This is the infamous NYPD that has been responsible for many deaths and vicious beatings of many people of color in the last few years. According to the website october22-ny.org, "at least 262 people in New York and New Jersey have been killed by law enforcement since September 11, 2001," including the well-known murders of Sean Bell and Amadou Diallo.

Judith Berkan, a long-time civil rights attorney and a law professor at UPR and InterAmerican University in San Juan, commented that the Fortuño administration "has enacted a staggering number of measures to neutralize and debilitate all those perceived as a threat to a local oligarchy acting in concert with U.S. interests." (Huffington Post, July 4)

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Workers begin fightback against capitalist onslaught

By John Catalinotto

EUROPE

On June 28, Greek sailors blocked Piraeus harbor's gates during 24-hour strike against EU and IMF-imposed pension cuts.

On June 24, during 24-hour strike, French workers blow vuvuzelas as they march in Marseille protesting attacks on pensions.

Workers across Europe — specifically in Greece, Portugal, France, Spain and Italy in the West and Romania in the East — have begun to resist the capitalists' relentless assault on their wages, benefits, social services and secure existence.

As in the United States, this bosses' attack has accelerated during the capitalist economic crisis that erupted when the U.S. housing market collapsed in the third quarter of 2008. The ruling class has exploited high joblessness and worker insecurity to force governments to "reform" labor laws — removing worker protections — and to cut social service benefits that workers had won in the period from the end of World War II to the disappearance of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Workers' responses in Europe have divided along two lines.

In some countries the entrenched union and political leaderships — as in the U.S. — have accepted the capitalist argument that "joint sacrifices must be made by everyone" to restore the capitalist economy. Under this leadership, the workers have already lost. Indeed, all the sacrifices are being dumped on the workers' backs.

In others — Greece is the primary example — the main union leadership or at least part of the union leadership has made the main slogan: "It's the bosses' crisis, and they should pay for it, not the workers!" While this attitude does not guarantee victory, it refuses to concede the struggle without a battle.

Where the union leadership has accepted the responsibility to make concessions, the big question is whether the workers can find and establish a new leadership that is willing and able to lead struggles. In the end, no lasting victory can be won without challenging capitalism itself, but big struggles will be needed even to defend the workers' daily life.

Inspiration from Greece

Greek workers with leadership from the PAME union confederation — close to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) — have led the way this year with a series of six day-long general strikes and other mass actions. These actions continue. On June 29, public and private sector workers paralyzed the country. The week earlier, PAME called strike actions that led to demonstrations in 60 cities. When attacked for being "illegal," the unions responded with the slogan: "Workers' rights are the law!"

Aleka Papariga, KKE general secretary, said at a demonstration of thousands in Athens, "We only have two options: either a fatalistic submission to poverty and misery, which will increase in magnitude, or to counter with courage and persistence and fight for social prosperity for the people." It is easy to see why communists and union militants all over Europe are looking to Greece for inspiration.

In Portugal, the Communist Party is still strong in the union federation CGTP. These unions held a strong general strike and demonstrations on May 29 and are now planning a similar day of action for July 8. The issues are similar, too. The Portuguese government, like Greece's led by a nominally Socialist Party, has led the attacks on workers' rights. Like Greece, Portugal is also one of the smaller and poorer countries of Western Europe, both

Continued on page 9

Interview with Iraqi author Haifa Zangana

Women in Iraq under imperialist siege

While both were attending an international conference in Asturias, Spain, this June, Iraqi author and activist Haifa Zangana granted an interview to Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto. Zangana's novels include "Women on a Journey," "Through Vast Halls of Memory" and "Keys to a City." She also wrote "City of Widows" about the occupation. Part 1 of 3.

JC: What was the role of women in the anti-colonial movement and your own involvement in politics in Iraq? How is this reflected in your writing? How did the 1990s sanctions impact on women and on all Iraqis?

HZ: Iraqi women have been among the most liberated of their gender in the Middle East. They have a long history of political activism and social participation since the 19th century, having taken part in the struggle against colonial domination and in the fight for national unity, social justice and legal equality throughout the 20th century. In fact, UNICEF reported in 1993 that "rarely do women in the Arab world enjoy as much power and support as they do in Iraq."

I was no exception.

I was a member of the Iraqi Communist Party-Central Leadership (CL), and was imprisoned in 1972 (in Qasr Al Nihaya first, then in Abu Ghraib) for my role in armed struggle while I was still a student at the school of pharmacy at Baghdad University.

The CL, which emerged in the mid-1960s, was a revolutionary faction in the Iraqi Communist Party. It opposed the ICP policies of collaborating with governments associated with the policies of the Soviet Union.

In the late 1960s, the CL became a powerful group within the ICP which advocated armed struggle in an effort to raise the masses, inspired by the Cuban revolution and the struggle in Vietnam. The CL fought for self-rule for Iraqi Kurds within a democratic Iraq and demanded an end of the occupation of Palestine.

I left Iraq in 1974 to work with the PLO in Syria and Lebanon and at the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon [1975], I moved to London. After I left Iraq, my family had to report regularly to the security office to prove that they had no contact with me.

Despite my being an opponent of the Baath regime, I always maintained the fact that it did not represent Iraqi people and Iraqis should not be punished for crimes committed by the regime. That's why I was actively opposing the brutal sanctions or the "siege" as we called it, which was established by United Nations Resolution 661 of Aug. 6, 1990, and lasted until the invasion in 2003.

The siege touched every aspect of Iraqi life, causing death, disease, rapid economic decline and nearly an end to any sort of human development. Unemployment increased, and people could not buy food or medicine. Health care and academic salaries declined from an average $200 monthly before the siege to $3 to $10 during it. In order to survive, Iraqis had to sell every material thing of value.

By the mid-1990s, half a million children had died, a crime considered by many to be genocide. When confronted with such statistics in 1996, Madeleine Albright, then U.S. ambassador to the U.N., [told Leslie Stahl in an interview on "60 Minutes"] that "the price was worth it" to change the Saddam regime.

Sanctions had a devastating effect on people's health, particularly on that of children and women. Iraqi scientists and doctors conducted considerable research into the causes of the unusual increase in cancer cases in the aftermath of the 1991 bombardment of depleted uranium by the U.S.-U.K., and again after its repetitive use during the "shock and awe" attack of 2003. Their conclusive evidence indicates that the use of DU is the cause of this new epidemic of cancer, though it has been met with complete denial by officials in both countries.

The suffering of Iraqi women extended from the physical to the psychological. Fifty-seven percent of Iraqi women suffered from depression, insomnia, weight loss and headaches due to shock caused by military bombardment, the death of their children, anxiety and uncertainty about the future. (UNIFEM, 2004)

To give you an example of the brutality of the sanctions: On Dec. 6, 1995, I sent an A4 padded envelope to my nieces and nephews in Mosul city. It contained one pencil case, three erasers, three sharpeners, six fountain pens, two markers, one glue stick and two Biros. It was marked "gift for children."

The envelope was returned, stamped: "Due to international sanctions against Iraq, we are not able to forward your packet." I was told to contact the British Department of Trade and Industry for further information.

Next: Invasion and occupation awaken resistance.

Haifa Zangana in Madrid, June 2010.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

World leaders concerned by increased U.S.-Israeli threats against Iran

Continued from page 1

40 percent of all the oil produced worldwide to pass through on its way to Asia, the U.S. and Western Europe.

Iran is already preparing for war on its northwestern border with Azerbaijan. On June 22 General Mehdi Moini of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards announced, "The mobilization is due to the presence of American and Israeli forces on the western border [of Azerbaijan]," adding that "Reinforcements are being dispatched to West Azerbaijan Province because some Western countries are fueling ethnic conflicts to destabilize the situation in the region." (FARS, June 28) Convoys of tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft units and infantry are headed toward Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea.

Although the U.S. and Israel have long denied having troops in Azerbaijan, given the history of disinformation by both, there is not much reason to believe them now.

Iran is surrounded by U.S. troops — in Iraq on its western border and in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east. Across the Persian Gulf to the south is Abu Dhabi, home of the U.S. Fifth Fleet. Azerbaijan to the north completes the encirclement.

In an ominous development, Iran's news agency reported that the Israeli Air Force recently unloaded military equipment at a Saudi Arabian base near Tabuk. Reportedly the Saudis have realigned their missile defense system to allow an air corridor for Israeli planes in case of a war with Iran.

Is war imminent? Fidel's warning

What can Iran do? On June 30 Ali Akbar Salehi, Iran's vice president and director of the nuclear program, announced that Iran has produced another 37 pounds of uranium enriched to 20 percent. Iran has a right to do this under the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, which it signed (and Israel has not). Iran maintains that their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. Contrast this with the U.S.'s 10,000 nuclear weapons and Israel's 300 or so.

The 20 percent level of enrichment achieved by Iran is far below the level needed to produce a nuclear weapon, although it is sufficient for peaceful purposes. Among the nations which are now enriching uranium are Argentina, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Belgium, Iran, Italy and Spain hold investments in the French Eurodif enrichment plant. Australia has developed SILEX, a laser enrichment process, which it will pursue through financial investment in a U.S. commercial venture by General Electric.

Iran has both the right and the capability to fight back. It is a vast country with a population of more than 70 million people. Only the most rabid U.S. and Israeli adventurers believe they could win a conventional war with Iran. The U.S. is already bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iranian military and government officials have warned that in case of an attack by either the U.S. or Israel, the country will target 32 American bases in the Middle East and Israel and will close the strategic Strait of Hormuz

The forces of imperialism cannot always be counted on to behave rationally. This is the concern of Fidel Castro, who knows what it is like to have one's country threatened with military attack, including by nuclear weapons. "I don't doubt in the least that as soon as the U.S. and Israeli warships occupy their positions — along with the rest of the U.S. military ships located near the Iranian coastline — and try to inspect the first merchant ship from that country, a shower of missiles will be set off in all directions. It will be the exact moment in which the terrible war will begin. It's impossible to predict how many ships will sink, nor under which flag." (Reflections, June 27)

Fidel continued: "What would be [the worst] is to suddenly be made aware of news of serious events, without having heard any news whatsoever beforehand about such possibilities, thereby falling into confusion and panic. … "

Not only people in the Middle East, but progressives worldwide should be prepared. Anti-imperialist and anti-war forces everywhere must redouble their efforts to stop a war on Iran. □

Europe: Workers fight back

Continued from page 8

with populations of about 10 million.

Unemployment is around 10 percent in Portugal, and under pressure from the big European and U.S. banks, the government is cutting the budget for education, health care and other social benefits. The class struggle continues to intensify.

In Spain, the union response has been more sporadic, with the intensity depending on the region. The strongest responses have been in the Basque Country, where there was a general strike on June 29 that mobilized most of the working class against the "reform" program of Socialist Party Premier José Zapatero — "reforms" that cut public workers' salaries by 5 percent and cut everyone's pensions.

A limited strike called by the national unions — the CCOO and the UGT — on June 8 had support in Catalonia and some other regions, less so nationwide and in Madrid. These union leaderships are close to Zapatero's party and have shown reluctance to challenge the government and fear that the more right-wing Popular Party will replace it. It was significant that the rank-and-file Cobas unions, which are pushing for more militant actions, held a larger demonstration in Madrid than did the official unions that day.

French strike June 24

In France, the center-right government wants to raise the retirement age from 60 to 62. French workers disagreed. Nearly a million took part in a general strike in May when the government formally announced its plan. Then, two million struck for a day on June 24 when the government took another step in approving this plan. A coalition of all the French union confederations has announced there will be another general strike when the French Parliament is scheduled to vote on the bill.

Participation was not only large but extremely broad. There were more than 200 marches all over France; only a small rural department in the Pyrenees Mountains abstained. A surprising number of nonunionized workers in the private sector took part.

The action expressed a real sense of solidarity between older and younger workers. Younger workers saw a decent retirement as hopefully part of their future, but something older workers needed right now. Older workers pointed out that if they retired, jobs and careers would open up for unemployed youths.

In Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi leads the center-right regime, one million workers demonstrated on June 25 against a similar anti-worker program. The largest demonstration took place in Bologna, with more than 100,000 people, followed by Milan, Naples and Rome, with 70,000 people, and 25,000 in Palermo in Sicily.

G. Dunkel contributed to this article.

WORKERS WORLD editorial

Whose crisis?

The employment figures for June confirmed the negative trend of earlier months for the U.S. economy and sent the stock markets down for the following few days. More jobs were lost than created. That official unemployment dropped a little was due only to the fact of 600,000 discouraged workers giving up the search for a job and thus ceasing to be counted as unemployed. That's another sign that the capitalist crisis that began at the end of 2007 is entering its second downturn, as Workers World contributing editor Fred Goldstein pointed out in an article earlier this year, based on a dip in production gains in the first quarter of 2010.

In short, the recovery was a "jobless recovery," that is, whatever uptick there was in production and profits, jobs continued to be lost.

Now it appears likely that the recovery was only a temporary blip up due to the stimulus funds. So now there may well be another downturn with an even greater loss of jobs.

There is now an argument taking place in the corporate media among establishment economic gurus. On one side are a few Keynesians, who want unemployment insurance extensions and a new stimulus to assist the state and local budgets — in order to rescue the capitalist system from its crisis. On the other side are the majority of neoliberals, most of whom have never done a day of honest work, who argue that unemployment insurance discourages workers from finding (nonexistent) jobs and want to balance budgets on the backs of the working class. They also believe this will revive the capitalist system.

We don't think the capitalist system deserves to be revived. Nor do we believe either measure that the pro-capitalist pundits are proposing will revive it.

But we do believe that workers' jobs, livelihood and living standards must be defended. We therefore demand that the Congress immediately extend unemployment benefits; that Washington subsidize state and local budgets so that no jobs are lost, no workers furloughed, no pensions cut; and that education and health care services be maintained.

And that government funds be used to create a massive public jobs program that can immediately employ millions of workers.

As the Greek workers say, "It's the bosses' crisis — let them pay for it!" □

As strikes continue

Debate over role of unions opens in China

By Deirdre Griswold

Strikes at foreign-owned companies in China continue to proliferate.

Factory workers at Mitsumi Electric, a Japanese-owned company, walked out on July 1 demanding a wage increase. Some 30 of the young workers, mostly women, then sat down at the main entrance to the plant, located in northeast China in Tianjin, the sixth-largest city in the country with a population of nearly 12 million.

Strikes are continuing in China. Here, low-paid workers sit down at the main entrance to a Mitsumi factory, demanding a wage increase.

Even as U.S. business media are starting to warn that, if strikes continue and wages rise in China, some companies will pull out and go elsewhere, the workers' struggle is gaining sympathy in the Chinese media and among high-level government officials.

A July 2 China Daily report on the Mitsumi walkout explained the workers' grievances:

"One [worker] told Xinhua News Agency earlier that he received just 1,500 yuan (US$220) a month despite working on Saturdays and putting in two hours of overtime every workday.

"One employee, who declined to be named, told China Daily she earns only 700 yuan per month, which is below Tianjin's minimum wage. ... The factory is the latest high-profile target in the slow-burning but persistent labor unrest that has been rocking foreign-owned companies, often left vulnerable by their position in complex supply chains and a tightening labor market. ...

"No specific law in China defines strikes as legal or illegal, but it is clear that authorities discourage such activity. However, those who have been taking the risks have been winning rewards.

"Workers in South China's Honda engine gear factory won a 24-percent wage increase after a two-week strike. Those in Pingmian Textile Group factory in Central China also got a 25-percent pay hike after a two-week strike.

"Liu Kaiming, the executive director of the Institute of Contemporary Observation, said the government should remain neutral whenever there is friction between management and workers.

"'Local governments in South China generally realize that a crackdown is not the right reaction to a labor dispute,' Liu said.

"'It's one reason the Honda strike could end with an agreement on salary increases. Local governments in Central China should learn from this.'

"There also have been calls to urge Chinese labor unions to play a more active role in protecting workers' legal rights and improving their wages and working conditions."

Growth of class antagonisms

This brief mention in the Chinese press of the role of local governments and the official trade unions gives a glimpse of the class struggle going on within the state structures as China's young workers assert themselves and demand improvements in wages and conditions.

For more than three decades, since adopting a long-term policy of "market socialism," People's China has opened up to foreign imperialist investment as a way of acquiring the capital to develop a modern industrial infrastructure and raise the standard of living. It has also allowed Chinese entrepreneurs to open businesses and grow rich. Within the last decade, capitalists have been allowed to join the Communist Party.

The official position is that these warring class interests can be accommodated peacefully within a mixed economy. The state still controls heavy industry, the basic levers of finance and the infrastructure, and is developing the economy according to a centralized plan.

However, especially in the past decade, the wealth gap between the workers and this new bourgeoisie has widened enormously. The presence of millionaires with ready cash has led to widespread corruption of officials and an erosion of the socialist principles on which the Chinese Revolution was based.

Burgeoning working class

At the time of liberation in 1949, China's working class was a small group in an overwhelmingly peasant country. Just 2.4 million out of 8 million workers were organized into unions.

Since then, the number of workers in China has increased over 35 times.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions is the officially recognized organization of the workers. As of 2008 it was the largest labor federation in the world, with 212 million members out of a total workforce of 287 million workers. It represented workers in 3.8 million enterprises. At least 70 percent worked in privately owned enterprises. (www.acftu.org.cn)

In the last two years, unions in the federation have successfully negotiated contracts for workers at a number of foreign-owned companies, including Wal-Mart and Yum Brands (owner of KFC and Pizza Hut), both of them notoriously anti-union U.S. firms.

The recent strikes that have broken out are not officially sanctioned by the ACFTU. However, a debate is raging within China over the federation's role, particularly with regard to labor disputes.

This is inferred by the disappearance from the federation's website of documents pertaining to labor disputes and migrant labor. It would appear that its positions on these topics are being revised. But there is also explicit evidence of a vigorous ideological debate among present and former unionists.

A "Position Statement of Old Revolutionaries on the Present Upsurge of Worker Action in China," issued on June 6, called on the Communist Party, the People's Congress, the State Council and all compatriots to support the Honda workers' just struggles and declared that "unions should clearly stand on the side of the working class to represent and uphold the interests of the working class as prescribed by the constitution." (chinastudygroup.net)

The statement was signed by five well-known "old revolutionaries," including Han Xiya, former alternate secretary of the Secretariat of the ACFTU.

This statement is very different in tone from reports in the Western media, including both the commercial press and social-democratic leaning publications, which push the building of "independent unions" in China and write off a role for the ACFTU in fighting for the workers' demands.

In the imperialist press, this dismissal of the ACFTU is often coupled with references to the "independent" Polish union called Solidarity, which became an important vehicle in the counter-revolutionary movement there. Most U.S. unions were caught up in support for Solidarity — which was manipulated by the CIA and led the Polish workers into a trap.

Its celebrated leader, Lech Walesa, was rewarded by becoming president of a capitalist Poland. The shipyard workers he had misrepresented in Gdansk lost their jobs when the yard was bought by imperialist investors, stripped of its equipment and then closed down.

Such "independence" is not what workers striking today in China want.

Next: Where is China heading?

USSF Environmental PMA

Pollution has no borders

Continued from page 7

astic applause.

Alejandro Villamar, with the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, noted: "It's quite clear that free trade agreements have caused great deterioration of the environment and our communities. In Detroit some complain about the dirty, exploitive jobs that left, while back home we complain about the dirty jobs that were brought to us.

"We need international solidarity from the South to the North to end this system that created this havoc," Villamar continued. "The neoliberal economic system has no solutions. We have to completely get rid of it."

Laotian activist Sandy Saeteurn, from the Asia-Pacific Environmental Network, addressed ecological justice issues for Asian immigrants. Saeteurn's family left Laos after the Vietnam War ended and moved to Richmond, Calif., a city surrounded by over 300 polluting industries.

"Now we are not worried about bombs being dropped in our backyard. We have to worry about Chevron Oil refineries," she stated. "But we are fighting back. When Chevron tried to expand, our community organized and said, 'Hell no!' We won not once but twice. Pollution has no borders. Why should people have to deal with borders?"

Next, Indigenous peoples blame corporations.

Immigrant rights & the 'Russia spy case'

FBI's new Cold War

Continued from page 1

journalist who writes for El Diario La Prensa, the major Spanish-language daily newspaper in the Northeastern U.S. Peláez has long been respected in the Latin American community for her anti-imperialist stance, and has written articles ranging from defense of Cuba and Venezuela to denouncements of police brutality, corporate negligence in the BP oil spill and more. Peláez received loud cheers when she spoke at a rally in support of immigrant and worker rights on May 1 at Union Square in New York.

In a statement, the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights denounced the attempt to put a chill on organizing: "The case has evoked memories of Cold War espionage and the dangers of the McCarthy period, where labor and other activists were rounded up for any progressive ideas. This period in U.S. history led to the

Imperialists try to block Zimbabwe's diamond trade

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Western imperialist states are continuing their efforts to undermine Zimbabwe's sovereignty. The most egregious campaign recently has been the attempt to block the southern African nation from selling its diamonds on the international market.

Utilizing the so-called Kimberly Process (KP), the international diamond trade controllers claim that they are seeking to prevent rebel armies, criminal elements and "rogue states" from marketing gems. Yet ruling-class interests in Europe and the United States heavily influence the criteria used to approve those who can market diamonds.

Several Western governments are opposing Zimbabwe, while the corporate media are stoking the flames of suspicion about President Robert Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party's intentions. Even though Mugabe and ZANU-PF — who fought for and won the national liberation of the country — have entered into a coalition with the Western-backed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T), the destabilization campaign against the leadership of the national democratic revolution continues unabated.

A recent article in Newsweek magazine reported, "The Kimberley Process, a body that tries to ensure diamonds do not fund war or human rights abuses, is meeting in Israel this week to decide whether Zimbabwe's diamonds should be allowed to trade on the world market." (Newsweek, June 22)

The New York Times wrote on June 24, "Zimbabwe's military has been accused of violently seizing control of the Marange fields in the eastern part of the country where the diamonds were mined and organizing smuggling operations there, prompting intense debate over giving it an international stamp of approval."

These corporate media reports ignore the right of Zimbabwe to control the mineral wealth of its national territory. With a history of attacks on the independence of the Zimbabwean state over a decade or more, it is not surprising that the military is guarding the diamond mines, considering the vast deposits of gems found in the area.

The Zimbabwe Sunday Mail reported on June 27: "An astonishing revelation has emerged from Israel: Zimbabwe has the potential to become a producer of 25 percent of the global diamonds supply in terms of value within just a few years. In practical terms, this means one in every four diamonds under the sun will come from Zimbabwe."

The debate over the control and distribution of the Zimbabwe diamonds has split largely along the lines of the international division of economic power. The African states, and China, Russia and India support the right of Zimbabwe to determine the utilization of its resources. The Western imperialist states maintain that outside bodies should control the supply.

Zimbabwe's Sunday Mail pointed out on June 27 that "virtually all the members of the Kimberley Process — except Australia, Canada, the United States and the European Union — are agreed that Zimbabwe has a right to sell its diamonds."

This article continues, "Owing to the discredited imperialist intentions harbored by these four spoilers, there was no consensus at the Tel Aviv meeting.

"'Every time the African countries and others spoke in favor of letting Zimbabwe export, there was resounding applause,' said one participant, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the deliberations were confidential. 'When the United States, Canada, Australia and the NGOs spoke, there was dead silence.'" (New York Times, June 24)

The Sunday Mail notes, "The people of Zimbabwe are outraged. How can this injustice continue? The same Western governments that have imposed racist sanctions on Zimbabwe are once again ganging up against our nation after discovering that the valuable stones of Marange are going to be Zimbabwe's economic salvation."

Zimbabwe is considering marketing its diamonds through other trading networks outside the KP, which has been thoroughly infiltrated by the imperialist states and their corporate backers. Several nongovernmental organizations with a long history of working to undermine Zimbabwe's sovereignty support the imperialists' opposition.

These groups include Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada along with Amnesty International of the U.K. and the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch. Zimbabwe has accused the West and its cheerleaders in the NGO circuit of working towards "regime change" despite the tremendous work it has done in building a unity government with the opposition.

The KP monitor to Zimbabwe, Abbey Chikane, has submitted a report that endorses the country's right to market its diamonds internationally. The report was put to a vote and 69 delegates voted in favor of Zimbabwe while only Canada, Australia, the U.S. and the European Union voted against.

However, when the imperialists realized that they had been defeated in a majority vote, the rules were suddenly changed. The chair of the Kimberley Process, Boaz Hirsch, then declared that there had to be total consensus on the question of Zimbabwe.

The Sunday Mail argues that since the KP-appointed monitor gave Zimbabwe the OK, there is no basis to claim Zimbabwe has "blood diamonds." It states that Zimbabwe can withdraw from the KP cartel and sell its diamonds.

U.S. pushes legislation to keep sanctions

Inside the halls of the U.S. Congress fresh efforts are underway to renew existing sanctions against Zimbabwe. The so-called Zimbabwe Renewal Act of 2010 sets out to amend the already operating Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act, which created the devastating sanctions regime against this sovereign African state.

In a press release during the week of June 21, the U.S. Information Center in Zimbabwe indicated that the new legislation advances what it calls "targeted sanctions." The bill will provide ongoing financial assistance to the MDC-T politicians and continue efforts to force the party of President Mugabe, ZANU-PF, out of the government of national unity.

The bill states that "some members of ZANU-PF" are hampering the democratic process and at the same time singles out Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Finance Minister Tendai Biti of the MDC-T for special praise. The press release stated that the bill "reflects strenuous debate in both the Democratic and Republican parties, influenced by the Congressional Black Caucus." (Zimbabwe Herald, June 22)

In response to the new round of threats against Zimbabwe in the arena of the international diamond industry and the most recent legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress, the military leadership of the country has encouraged the national army to safeguard the independence of the state. □

Continued from page 10

devastation of many lives, ruining the careers of hundreds and the frame-up of innocent people all with the aim of quelling a progressive voice in this country."

The coalition also takes note of the term "illegals" to refer to the 11: "The characterization of the 11 as 'illegals' — a formulation promoted by the government and picked up by all the media — further exacerbates the anti-immigrant climate in this country. It is part of the psychological warfare carried out by elements in the government, as well as in the media. It is an attempt to make the word 'illegal' synonymous with 'immigrant.' It is part of the continued drive to equate the immigration issue with the issue of homeland security, a concept we also reject."

A newly formed Committee in Defense of Vicky Peláez reports, "In a conversation with her lawyer, Carlos Moreno, Ms. Peláez repeated her innocence and stated that this accusation against her and her husband, Juan Lázaro, is a political persecution based on the criticism that she made in her columns against the erroneous policies of the United States." (July 1 email)

The committee held an emergency protest in support of Peláez on July 1 and will be holding a meeting July 10 in New York City. For more information, call 212-631-7555. □

Police attack on G20 protests condemned across Canada

By G. Dunkel

Canadian labor unions, the parliamentary New Democratic Party, and civil rights, community and religious groups have all joined in demonstrations to condemn police attacks on protesters at the June 26-27 G20 summit in Toronto and to express solidarity with those arrested.

These attacks resulted in 900 people being detained, the most ever swept up in Canada during peacetime.

Protests in Montreal on July 1 also focused on how Toronto cops singled out Quebecers because they were speaking in French. About 50 Quebecers had been taken into custody on June 27 at a University of Toronto student building where they were being billeted. Another 150 were picked up during the actual marches. (Montreal Gazette, July 2)

According to Danie Royer of Anti-Capitalist Convergence, the group that organized in Montreal for the G20/G8 protests, 450 people from Montreal rode on buses to Toronto on June 25 but only 125 took the buses back.

Other protests on July 1 took place in Toronto, Windsor and Ottawa in the province of Ontario, as well as Winnipeg in Manitoba and Edmonton in Alberta. The Vancouver Community Mobilization Network has scheduled a protest for July 4 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

The Ontario section of the Canadian Union of Public Employees issued a statement saying its members had gone to Toronto on June 26 "to make our voices heard on economic, environmental, equality and trade justice issues which were ignored by the G20 leaders."

It added that the union "actively supported and participated in the G20 protests." While distancing itself from those accused of burning cop cars and damaging property, it went on to focus on what the cops did: "What we have witnessed is nothing short of the abandonment of the rule of law ... by a massive and heavily armed police force who were charged with overseeing them [the protests]. Due process, civil liberties and the right to peaceful protest have been the victim.

"It is a sad day in Canada when those who would peacefully protest, those who are charged with reporting on it, even those who simply happen upon it, are subject to the level of excessive and arbitrary force and violence we have all witnessed either in person or watching our televisions and computer screens.

"It's a sad day when over a thousand people can be arrested and detained for hours, even days, without due process of their rights to legal counsel or any contact with family or friends, without any evidence that they actually broke the law, and with 700 being released without any charges."

CUPE Ontario represents about 235,000 workers.

CUPE along with Amnesty International, the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association are calling for a full and impartial inquiry into the events. The Toronto police and the Ontario government are stonewalling any investigation.

The Globe and Mail, one of Canada's major newspapers, has debunked the cops' charges that the protesters were armed. Nevertheless, the police blithely ignored the growing furor over their brutal methods, which are amply documented by video clips on rabble.ca, a major alternative media presence in Canada.

The police left the area just before some demonstrators set fire to police patrol cars. Prominent Canadian activist Judy Rebick alleges the police had a secret agenda. Rebick wrote on her blog on rabble.ca, "They abandoned their police cars and allowed them to burn, not even calling the fire department until the media had lots of time to photograph them. They had a water cannon but they didn't even use a fire extinguisher. Why?"

Rebick goes on to allege this inaction came from the "police playing politics, justifying the expense and responding to the critiques building all week about excessive and arbitrary police powers."

What the cops did in Toronto on June 26-27 shocked a lot of Canadians who have not before experienced such naked police repression of dissent. □

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Esperanza para los/as trabajadores/as con bajos salarios en todo el mundo

Victorias de huelgas en China estremecen a explotadores imperialistas

Por Deirdre Griswold

Los/as trabajadores/as con conciencia de clase y los/as marxistas de todo el mundo han observado el rápido crecimiento económico de la China Popular en las últimas dos décadas con admiración pero también con ansiedad.

Ya sea que se considere a China como país capitalista o como uno aún fundamentalmente socialista, nadie puede negar el asombroso progreso material hecho por este vasto país, hogar de una quinta parte de la población mundial. Tampoco se puede negar que gran parte del crecimiento industrial de China ha llegado a la par de la inversión de corporaciones imperialistas que recorren el mundo en su búsqueda de trabajadores/as educados/as pero con bajos salarios.

Recientemente, una intensa explotación de los/as trabajadores/as en China por parte de estas corporaciones parece haber provocado una serie de suicidios entre los/as empleados/as de Foxconn, el fabricante de iPhone con sede en Taiwán, despertando indignación pública y un debate sobre los salarios y las condiciones de trabajo.

La pregunta para el movimiento ha sido, ¿permanecerán pasivos los/as trabajadores/as chinos/as ante la presión de los patronos capitalistas de reducirles a esclavos/as asalariados/as? ¿O se organizarán y militantemente exigirán sus derechos en un país que ha inscrito en su constitución un papel central tanto para la clase obrera como para el objetivo de lograr el socialismo?

Desde mayo, un sector muy importante de la clase trabajadora de China — en su mayoría jóvenes inmigrantes de las provincias del interior que por decenas de millones han viajado a la costa en busca de trabajo tanto en obras de construcción del estado como en las plantas de propiedad de los capitalistas — han dado la respuesta.

Trabajadores/as de la Honda desencadenan ola de huelgas

Lo que se ha convertido en una oleada de huelgas, con enormes implicaciones para la lucha de clases en todas partes, se desencadenó cuando los/as trabajadores/as en una planta de repuestos de la Honda pararon sus trabajos el 17 de mayo.

Eventualmente, casi toda la planta — 1.900 trabajadores/as — apagaron sus máquinas y se unieron a la huelga. La falta de piezas para las transmisiones automáticas provenientes de esta planta en Foshan, provincia de Guangdong, y las huelgas que pronto siguieron en las plantas de otras piezas, obligó a la Honda a cerrar cuatro plantas de ensamblaje.

La huelga de Foshan llegó a un acuerdo a principios de junio, cuando la Honda acordó subir los salarios de todos/as los/as empleados/as en más de un 30 por ciento, así como dar a los/as trabajadores/as los bonos regulares en efectivo basados en la asistencia.

Sin embargo, no bien comienza esta huelga, cuando los/as trabajadores/as en otras empresas — la mayoría, propiedad al menos en parte de empresas japonesas — también pararon. Además de las huelgas en varias fábricas de la Honda, los/as trabajadores/as en la Nissan y en Toyota también salieron en busca de mayores salarios.

Las huelgas también han sido reportadas "en una suplidora de efectos deportivos con fondos taiwaneses en la provincia de Jiangxi y en la fabricante japonesa de máquinas de coser Brother Industries en Xi'an, capital de la provincia de Shaanxi". (People's Daily Online, 23 de junio)

A sólo dos días después del acuerdo en la Honda, entre 300 y 500 trabajadores/as de la fábrica Merry Electrónics — un fabricante taiwanés de componentes de audio también en Guangdong — comenzaron una huelga y bloquearon carreteras durante la mayor parte del día. La compañía respondió de inmediato con el anuncio de un aumento salarial del 22 por ciento, mientras negaba que el aumento tuviera alguna relación con la huelga. (Grupo de Estudio de China, "Wildcat Strikes in China")

De paros a ocupaciones

En una planta de cerraduras de la Honda, localizada también en la provincia suroriental china de Guangdong, los/as trabajadores/as fueron aún más allá, yendo de una huelga a una ocupación. Se salieron el 9 de junio, pero luego fueron amenazados/as con ser despedidos/as por los gerentes de la Honda y reemplazados/as por nuevos/as trabajadores/as a contrato.

Cinco días más tarde, muchos/as de los/as 1.400 trabajadores/as "entraron en fila a la fábrica con sus impecables uniformes blancos, dando la apariencia de que la huelga que comenzó el miércoles pasado había terminado. Pero los/as trabajadores/as dijeron que se presentaron sólo porque temían ser despedidos/as después de que la compañía había publicado avisos diciendo que estaba buscando trabajadores/as de reemplazo — a un salario mucho más alto. Una vez dentro, comenzaron una acción de brazos caídos para presionar por sus demandas de un aumento del salario básico de 900 yuanes, a 1.600 yuanes al mes". (Wall Street Journal, 13 de junio)

Estas acciones militantes parecen reflejar dos aspectos importantes: primero, que hay una escasez de mano de obra en China, dando a los/as trabajadores/as una mayor influencia sobre sus patronos, y segundo, que el gobierno ha estimulado a los/as trabajadores/as en sus reivindicaciones salariales.

Estas dos condiciones no están presentes en los países capitalistas en este tiempo de desempleo masivo, concesiones contractuales y recortes.

Pocos días después del acuerdo en la Honda, el gobierno chino anunció que en cuatro provincias de la costa donde se concentra la industria de propiedad extranjera — Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangdong y Shanghái — el salario mínimo se incrementó entre un 10 a un 20 por ciento. (People's Daily Online, 8 de junio) Con ello ascendió a 14 el número de provincias que han aumentado el salario mínimo desde enero de este año.

El premier chino Wen Jiabao, recalcó públicamente la necesidad de un mejor trato para los/as trabajadores/as migrantes. Reconoció que la nueva generación que emigra de los pueblos para trabajar en las fábricas no iba a sentirse satisfecha con las duras condiciones que enfrentaron sus padres.

Los medios de comunicación en los EEUU que tienen miedo de revelar muy abiertamente su prejuicio contra los/as trabajadores/as, parecieron tomar un tono neutral hacia estas huelgas. Pero los que se dirigían a los inversionistas y ejecutivos de empresas no podían ocultar su consternación por la militancia, tanto de los/as trabajadores/as como del papel del gobierno chino.

"Los ejecutivos dicen que la actitud relativamente tolerante del gobierno central chino frente a las huelgas desde que comenzaron a surgir una serie de disputas el mes pasado, puede ser un factor fomentando a los/as trabajadores/as para que ejerzan presión a favor de sus cuestiones. En las recientes controversias de trabajo en el sur de China, las autoridades en general se han abstenido de enviar a la policía para romper huelgas, una táctica usada a menudo cuando las disputas toman un perfil alto". (WSJ, "Toyota's China Assembly Lines Vulnerable to Labor Unrest", 18 de junio)

Esta actitud "tolerante" del gobierno ha alarmado a los imperialistas. Y no se inició con estas huelgas en las empresas de propiedad extranjera.

En julio pasado, cuando funcionarios de la empresa estatal del Grupo Hierro y Acero Tonghua en la provincia de Jilin convocaron a una reunión masiva para anunciar a miles de trabajadores/as que la planta iba a ser privatizada y la mayoría perdería sus puestos de trabajo, se armó la grande. Los/as trabajadores/as agarraron a un gerente del grupo que iba a hacerse cargo de la planta y lo golpearon mortalmente. La respuesta del gobierno no fue caer sobre los/as trabajadores/as, sino que canceló la privatización. (WSJ, 27 de julio)

Los/as trabajadores/as en las industrias que son propiedad del estado tienen seguridad de empleo y mejores condiciones de trabajo y beneficios que los/as del sector privado. Ellos/as han dejado ver claro que no van a permitir que les quiten esos derechos.

Amenazas de irse a otros lugares

¿Qué están diciendo los ejecutivos de las corporaciones extranjeras al gobierno chino sobre las recientes huelgas? ¿No están amenazando con retirar sus inversiones si los/as trabajadores/as siguen poniendo presión y el gobierno no los/as reprime? ¿No están diciendo: "Podemos ir a India o a Indonesia, saben"?

De hecho, eso es precisamente lo que están diciendo a través de la prensa. El Wall Street Journal, que habla sin ninguna disculpa a nombre del capital financiero estadounidense, citó a un ejecutivo de la compañía japonesa Investigaciones Avanzadas:

"El Señor Endo estima que la remuneración anual para cada trabajador/a en China podría costar tanto como 400.000 a 500.000 yen, dado los recientes incrementos de sueldo. Esto sería casi el doble del promedio pagado a un/a trabajador/a de una fábrica en la India o un 33 por ciento más alto de lo que se paga a un/a trabajador/a en Tailandia, dijo él.

"La jaqueca laboral que tiene la Honda en China llega al tiempo en que la compañía está luchando por mantener el nivel de la creciente demanda en el país, el cual se convirtió en el mercado más grande de automóviles a nivel mundial el año pasado". ("Honda's Long-Haul Dilemma in China", 24 de junio)

Por supuesto, las compañías automotrices estadounidenses pueden consolarse con el hecho de que son sus competidores japoneses los que están afectados por la actual ola de huelgas. Pero la clase multimillonaria en los Estados Unidos no se puede olvidar de que hace poco la Federación de Sindicatos de Toda-China forzó a Wal-Mart firmar un contrato con sus trabajadores/as — algo que ese gigante minorista todavía no ha hecho dentro de los Estados Unidos.

Ahora mismo la FSTC está respaldando una campaña para organizar Yum Brands, el dueño estadounidense de las cadenas de comida rápida KFC y Pizza Hut. Con más de 3.500 restaurantes KFCs, Pizza Huts y otras sucursales allá, Yum acumuló un 48 por ciento de sus ganancias globales en el primer cuarto por sus operaciones en China. (WSJ, "Compañías elevan el sueldo para los chinos", 13 de junio)

Claramente, no solamente están preocupados los japoneses sino también las corporaciones estadounidenses — no solo por el ánimo que estas huelgas están dando a los/as trabajadores/as en China sino sobre su impacto sobre los/as trabajadores/as con sueldos bajos en todo el mundo, incluyendo en los Estados Unidos. Durante las últimas tres décadas ha habido un asalto implacable sobre los sueldos y beneficios de los/as trabajadores/as estadounidenses lo cual se ha intensificado enormemente con la crisis económica capitalista actual.

Los intereses de los/as trabajadores/as por todas partes se juegan en esta lucha.

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